7/6/72

Dear Howard,

Your letter of the first didn't get here until today, in a very large mail than included a letter from Sylvia dated the fourth and two manila envelopes of materials I had asked her for a mont of so ago fated the fifth. So, there seems to have been some delay in yours. I read it earlier and will now respond. First I felt I had to give Sylvia a lengthy response. If she did not send you a copy, I will if you want it, It does not address what I wrote, as I recall, accuses me of thinking the entire world in in aconspuracy against me, of a need to destroy others, twice of accusing others of betraying me, those listed being "Gary, Jerry, Wecht, Crosby, Epstein, Lifton, Forman, Mary, Maggie and myself." How she forgot my parents, sisters and wife I can't imagine.

I m past the point where I'm going to have to cut seriously into the time I spend in correspondence on this. t is now 8 o'clock and I've done nothing for myself so far today, not even writing what are for us important business letters. I feel your letter also warrants rapid response, but I'm not going to go over in detail what I think your mind is not letting you take apart as it can and what I did go over with you in detail. It is this fear that led me to suggest to you a while ago that you do some things to get your mind off of this. I will give you a very simple answer and if that does not suffice, I'm sorry. When anyone now, under the sanction of the Kennedys or their agent or that contract sees the film and anything else that the press, without exception, will say the Kennedys only suppressed (and I've tested this on nesmen and it is inevitable), the result will be the defaming of the innocent, the blaming of those least responsible of those who are responsible for the official errors, and the exculpation of those most responsible, particularly the FBI, Hoover and the staff. You are aware of Specter's preparations for this. They will all cite something and they will all be heard. If I can't justify what Warren did, he carries enough blame if he bears his own alone. Not Hoover's, Specters, etc. The way these things work it will be the family of the President (a concept if you have any concern for the national honor that you also consider instead of the family name) that gets most if not all the blame, and the truth will never catch up. Nor will we ever be able to make a dent in anything without undertaking a pointed defense of the family per se. Nobody will ever ask, for exampIle, what was the need for the contract? Nobody will ever know that no Kennedy had anything to do with it, or ever had the film, or anything like tthat. We did go into all of these aspects in some detail, and if you do not recall them, then your mind is rebelling, which is understandable. Even if at this point most people believed the Warren Report, as I believe few do, what difference would to now make to establishing truth if such a person came out and persuaded the whole world if it would drop dead then with the innocent being blamed for the error, the guilty exculpated, and what slight prospect of carrying anything forward would be lost in the enormous scadal of "JFK's Family Suppressed Evidence of Killing"? To the best of my knowledge, except for my work, all the bastards are covered if the press ever gets past the banner headline. This is why I made some of the book so detailed. My selfish attitude is further expressed in the belief that if so many of those calling themselves genuine critics and possessed of the means had the inselfishness they profess this would be impossible, for the contrary evodence would be out and in enough hands. Remember when Ned was talking about doing this, I said I'd need the first 1,000 to give away?Press and all the members of Congress. Now I hope you can see why, BEFORE any of this.

You have legitimate questions that for the most part from the hasty reading I think can be attributed to my haste and looseness in phrasing.

I can address your torment and position in no way other than I have: we never at any time know what IS right. We can only do what at any time we Believe to be right. I think you have a clause in your first graph that says it all but even though you want me to argue this with you knowing that I have refused to, I think it would be unfair to both of us.
I I presume your paragrpah of Ross is based not only on observation when he was here but on things he said when I was not with you. I was sure he told us he was going to pls, and I'm glad you confirm. He told the CTIA people he was going to Dallas, and from what Mary said he did.

What I wanted you to write Mary was what Sylvia had told you, esp. about me. Mary has known Sylvia well. I am concerned about Sylvia's emptional stability, no less so after her letter that came today which avpids confrontation with some pretty specific stuff.

Technically, as you see it, you are correct in what begins with the paragraph "You have said on repeated occasions that you have invited dialogue...and nobody responded. Dialogue, no listening to me. I meant, of course, in writing. For example, before I discussed it with you I did with Lesar, Smith at least, I think Bud, with Mary 11/71, with Gary 1/72, with Jerry on several occasions. But nobody really challeneged me, there was no meaningful exchange, mostly people listened and agreed or disagreed, no real dialogue. I had forgotten about Dick's letter, but you tell it like it is, no dialogue. Your words, you agreed with my description "unrealistic". Hoch also wrote me a meaningless letter much, much later, but no exhange. And when I saked Dick, as you note, "take it from here an think it through", it went no further. I don't Sylvia responded. Wecht didn't. Gary didn't. So there were either no answers or no real exchanges, my meaning in dialogue. I think you must have noted that I began by refusing to say what I thought, asking them to think first. With Lesar, it took the form of me asking him questions.

I think you misunderstood what I said about criticism of other critics. In private I have, with pointedness. In public, in speeches and on radio and TV, I have in each case found something good I could say about each one, or at least what most of the audience would take as good. I do not think you can fairly describe what I did in the Epilogue to WWII as " tearing into" Lane and Epstein personally. I am sure I have told you more than once that it is the evil doctrine of their work, and I gave you illustrations I will repeat if you want, that impelled me to continue writing. It is quite consistent with the present mess. My thinking is the same.Lane, for example, eliminating the identification of every staff lawyer. I laid Tiger aside to do this, and also didn t return to work I was doing before the ass. work. In the writing to which you refer, I address this doctrine, not them as persons. I do the same with LOOK and Knebel, with the silent friends of the President, etc. There is a big difference between letting this kind of work go unchallenged and personal attack on a personal basis. I don't think I have ever done that with any.

Now on the Sacvengers, that was before your time. First of all, I agreed to talk to them only off the record saying that I would not be part of any public criticism of any of my competitors. They had told me quite the opposite of what emerged about their project. They were doing an historical document. When they called me from Penn Jones' I believed them. They ~~xxxxxxxx~~ went into a whole spiel of college audiences, etc. So, first of all, what I said was off the record, for their information only. I don't recall what I said about L or EJE. Much of what I said is about one they do not name, Popkin. I said of Lane and E only what everyone now knows and thinks. But I did not expect it to be used as anything but guidance.

The one clear recollection I haveof the kookie reporter from whatever in Phila is that he was excessively provocative, was firm in the belief that all good flowed from Salandria alone, if not the discovery of sex, then the invention of the wheel. With all that we had then been through with S, that was a bit too much. Whenyou say I didn't know Salandria ("you knew neither") you could not be more wrong. What he put me through on more than one occasion I'll never forget, from his letter I refer to in that to Sylvia, to ruining 3 1/2 hrs of a four hr Jack McKinney show with rubbishy fillibusters about the wrong or the stupid (like Connaly wasn't hit until about Z 293, which took almost an hour) that didn't end until on a commercial I said unless he shut up I was walking out then and there, the Garrison stuff that continues, Judge Halleck case, and more. I do, indeed, know Salandria, and I'm not taking the kind of shit his friend came down to deliver from anyone. He has been one of our collective greatest liabulities and an enormous burden to Lil and me. Ask her. And have you forgotten that he dedicated some of his work to the FBI and praised Frazier? He has done terrible things. With Ross it was also in private and again for his guidance only. Have I not done the same with you? That is not the same as taking the stump.

If Wecht wanted me in on it, he took a lot of pressuring to ask, and it was then pretty late.I'm skipping. I can't addres all of this.

Sylvia's expressions about my financial state had come to me earlier, so I began by partially addressing them in what I wrote. That is nothing to some of the stuff Bud, who has to be a milionaire, has said. And worse, done.

It was worse than your word, presumptious, of her to decide where we should move. And with an apartment there is rent every month. Some months not a penny comes in except from a very minor bookkeeping account, one of Lil's. How could I pay rent. You ll see an explanation, however, in my letter. I hope it is enough to teach her how arrogant she is, how she makes things up and believs them, which is her criticism of Garrison. I suppose she'd

say worse if she knew I'd let a black famil move in after they told me they were on welfare, as they were, at a $10 weekly rental they never pay and I have since found out that the man makes $7 or $8 an hour as a mason. More, he almost burned the place down. The firemarshall's estimate of damage was $10,000. I am finally getting $4,000 from the insurance company after fighting for a year. When we get it and pay the taxes on both properties, the debt interest now due and the next, our medical costs and only part of this year's payment on debt principal, it will be all gone and I can only hope the man keeps his word to make the repairs for the rent he hasn't paid. He has only started and done enough to get back in. I suppose she'd have me put him and all those kids out?

You know, when you quote Sylvia to me in a "we" context after she has quit for so long, takes summers off for nice vacations, I get a bit pissed off at that "we" stuff. Who gave her either the license of the right to sit back, do nothing except fuck up, and then pontificate "we" while a few do all the work that is done.

I'll give you a simple explanation: if you have a choice, would you do what has little prospect of doing any serious good and greater if not plain great prospect of doing harm? There is nothing significant that Wecht is going to even be able to add to the public record but error and indlugence of what I am becoming convinced is Sylvia's desire to hurt me, that of which she accuses me of wanting for everybody else. It is a lie to say that earlier "future fears" stopped us, and it is surely a lie to say it ever could have stopped any of the work she ever did.

You and she gotta be crazy to say and think that the stuff in 1966 late and 1967 didn't make a difference. Not the CBS and NBC specials, the books, the AP series? Man, you are farout! All the books together didn't get that kind of attention and certainly not where it counts, among opinion makers. Can you remember as far back as the greeting Lattimer got? Think that is new?

You do not have to satisfy yourself that Specter and the FBI will have a reason to defend themselves. It will be done automatically. The context alone, aside from the traditional dishonestu of the press, avpids the need for them. I took this up with a correspondent who is a personal friend just last weekend. He is absolutely without doubt that I am right, that the press will do exactly as I say, and especially with the daily press the situation is one that gives reporters absolutely no choice. They are goint to say that the famil suppressed the stuff that counts and that if they had no, there would not have been this mistake. But anyway, Oswald is guilty. Can Cyril address even the finger on the trigger from anything he sees? You know what we know that he can't see. Aside from what they can do to him and Nichols with a little briefing.

Anything bad about a Kennedy helps the Republicans and the right-wing forces inside the democratic party. That should be obvious, as should the timing of the decision to let Cyril in, perfectly with Teddy's coming out for McG. And do you not remember Marshall's letters to me in which he says he leaves all this up to the Archivist?Who do you think Rhoads serves?

That taking this lying down stuff about others named is utterly unrealistic. So Teddy says I stopped beating my wife, or I didn't know I was beating my wife? What can he say when he knows nothing and the contract was signed in the family name and there was no need for the contract and Bobby is dead? And what could Bobby have said about this? That the government of which he was part drafted a contract his lawyer signed for him and he didn't mean or understand? Who is there,who will have a chance to talk, who can have anything to say that can be heard? And I don t know who will be "lying down" except us? Remember Graham said he'd get back to me before he wrote anything? Did he? Howard, this is fairy-tale stuff, as I told Sylvia and as the record and the realities of press life leave without question. They'll rush to their typewriters and will write as fast as they must and it will all be over in a big swoosh. I have gone into all these things with you before. I suggest that your distress at the situation you are in and the tons of shit that have been poured on you endlessly are keeping you from thinking clearly and recalling clearly. Your formulations here are so unreal, so far from what really happens, that I can conclude nothing else.

Now let me give you a simple formulation. The family is blamed, the FBI is cleared, the staff lawyers are cleared, it makes little difference whether or not the members are, there is nothing to show Oswald didn't shoot that Cyril can see or say. Where do we go from here with this done? What difference, in fact, will it make if Cyril can say there has to have been another shooter? They'll still be able to say LHO was the killer and will.

There is another side of this you do not address: what is Cyril going to say that he hasn't already said or that did not come out in N.O.? I mean real serious stuff, aside from whether or not it is already in PM? And what attention did that get, how long did even Lattimer's stuff get played? Any attention in any paper of which you know for his two later things? And they are justification to the press?

You should be less troubled when you think of what I've told you that you ignore. If the government wants this to happen, it WILL happen, Cyril or no. Cyril can merely hurt us more. I have nevr changed on this, saw and said it from the first. But look at the other side, if we have to undo this, with Cyril's bold shot, who do we have? Suppose, just suppose, it does go the way I say it is intended to. Upon whom will we be able to draw for any kind of refutation, including the one that would have been effective so long ago when I suggested it to Cyril without response?

So, lets say, for the sake of argument that something can go wrong as I fear the intent and the chances are. Now who is going to ask himself what we can do about it, what chances we have of being able to do anything about it, and unless somebody can come up with something better than greasy kid stuff, as I see it there has to be something really world-shaking to run any unnecessary risk.

Of course, if there is damage, the real hurt is to society and to what we say we want and I m less persuaded about how much some are dominated by this to the exclusion of other considerations. I have been explicit enough on this with you with some. But on an individual level, who can get hurt? Not Sylvia, who has been out of it long except for the mouth. Not Jerry, who was never in it except for trouble and I now think kicks, which is not to say he is not a serious man of generally good principles and interets. He has just been entirely too irresponsible, and I can't get it out of mind that he was down here and acted as though he had done nothing. It boils down to a very few of us.

To me it is a form or Russian roulette.

I've been disturbed by all this, by Sylvia's non-responsiveness, by the other things I should be doing and can't because of all of this (and Lil's reaction has been bad), and during the writing of this I've been interrupted too much, including by some new impending trouble to the nephew.

To summarize, if you can't see how this is the ideal mechanism for exculpating the ones most guilty, you are not thinking. Do you need any more than this?

Now remember, if the government really wants it, it is going to happen anyway, so spare yourself guilt feelings. Nichols is waiting in the wings. There is Chapman. There is whatever person Graham might decide upon. They can get plenty of others if they so desire, one of the reasons I have written some of the letters of which I've sent you copies. If they are not sincere, what the hell have I spent all that time for.

This is a frame that has been in the works since at least the time the contract was drafted and I think from the time of the autopsy, pretty much. You should have read my letter on why the contract. Have you an answer that satisfies you other than as a federal frame? I don't. I thought of this long ago and I'm pretty certain I forgot to include it in PM.

Have you any satisfactory answer to why Marshall says he leaves it up to heads? If you do, I don't and would welcome some innocent explanation.

There is too much of this out of your consideration. There really is only one question for you, are you to be part of it. It makes no difference whether or not you are -except to you. It really can't make any major difference in the result, as I see it. I can see it wrongly, but this is the way I do. To a degree you do. The clause to which I referred earlier is,"I made a decision which now seems meaningless." You addressed some aspects with Jerryyou have forgotten. Reading that letter deceived me into think that you had thought it through clearly. What happened since you wrote that to confuse your thinking? Until I got your letter to Jerry I stayed tempted to call you, but I just couldn't. I wanted to. I fear a combination of things, including what Sylvia does not recongize in herself, whatever it is. I think there is enough plan falsehood in her letter that I expose pretty bluntly, like her reason for not coming here and her record with Smani and Salandria and what they did to me. This is unlike her, as it is unlike her to avoid direct challenges. She can be as persuasive as she can be eloquent. And what is conspicuous to me, to this very day she has avoided any discussion of this in any form with me or any confrontation with those things I said about Wecht. Either I'm a liar or he has a not good record. Her letter to me it much too tolerant for the letter I wrote her. Her wanting Jerry in on this is absolutely insane. But I've got to stop. Calm down, stop worrying and whatever you finally do won't make that much difference. Best,